

*Devdhar* (1954) Department

**SERIES.**

**G.O. No.** 5636

**Dated**

5-12-54

**[Despatch Abstract.]**

**Broad-cast talk - Talk on 'Women and Co-operation' - Approved**

## BROADCAST TALK ON 'WOMEN AND CO-OPERATION'

The subject of this evening's talk is Women and Co-operation. I am not sure how many women are present among my listeners, but few as they may be, I shall explain to them briefly the message of co-operation.

No movement in the modern world can progress or prosper unless it assigns to women their rightful place in direction and control as much as in enrolment and participation. In European countries co-operation among women has developed to such an extent that not only do they have women's co-operative guilds, in boroughs and countries federated into a national guild at the central headquarters but they are having an "International Women's Co-operative guild", with its office in London. This guild has united all those countries which have national women's organisations. To us in India a knowledge of the achievements of such organisations in the West, serves as a pointer and for taking them as models to be followed. It is not necessary that we should re-produce identical institutions in our soil but a real appreciation of the manner in which they have applied themselves to the problems confronting women from time to time, will stand us in a good stead to steer clear of difficulties and overcome vicissitudes by emulating their courageous perseverance and their enduring patience in doing constructive work.

(2) Let me then tell you briefly at the outset what these achievements are. Ever since the earliest days of the movement, Co-operative Societies in England accepted, as they now do in India, women's right to equal membership with men; but women took little part in the life of the society. But nearly sixty years ago, this indifference of women in England to the management of the day-to-day affairs of their co-operative societies was felt to be an impediment in the way of the movement's real progress and steps were taken betimes to set right the defect. The women first began participating in the movement by purchasing their household requirements, which was their main concern from Co-operative Stores. Gradually they extended their activities to taking part in meetings, readings, discussions and other matters relating to the management of the institutions. From these proposals grew the 'English Co-operative Women's guild' which in 1938 had nearly 80,000 members and branches in every Co-operative Society in England. The guild is a democratic organisation, but it is not a co-operative society or a part of the co-operative society. It is a voluntary unregistered organisation but non-the-less a businesslike one with elected committees and officers, minutes of proceedings, annual reports, and accounts. The funds are derived from the members' own small subscription, though in most cases the co-operative society in connection with which the branch of the guild works, makes a small grant and very often provides a room in which meetings may be held. The weekly meetings conducted by the guild helped in no small measure to enliven the life of the working women to whom life was a grinding round of duties, responsibilities and anxieties and who often felt herself undervalued, however much her husband's family might, in fact, depend on her. For such and especially for these latent intellectual powers the guild was a doorway into a larger, lighter and more varied world. Once in a week the handpressed housewife imprisoned for life in her kitchen could escape from her too familiar a home to be amused and stimulated and to experience at once the consciousness of her individuality with equals which had hitherto been reserved for men and for a small number of educated women who could find spare time. The guild interests itself in propaganda and conducts special district schools and week-end schools to educate its members 'Women's place in the Co-operative Movement'. The Co-operative movement as a social uplifter; are some of the subjects taken up in these schools.

In the U.S.A., Women play an important part in the education work of the department of Agriculture, while selected men in each country known as 'country agents' are employed for visiting farmers, advising farmers and spreading information regarding developments in scientific Agriculture. Selected women known as /P.T.O

as 'country agents' are employed for visiting farms, advising farmers and spreading information regarding developments in scientific Agriculture. Selected women known as 'Home Demonstration agents.' do the canning, dehydrating, and freezing of farm products, child care, nutritious foods, kitchen gardens and household arts. The women's co-operative market, the first of its kind, in U.S.A. conducted by the farm women of Montgomery, may be of interest to us. It is an example of how rural women bring quality produce within the reach of the city consumers. The qualifications for participation in the market are that a woman should have a farm of at least 7 acres and derive most of her income from farm operations. She becomes a member on purchasing two shares of 2 dollars and makes use of the market on the agreement that she will pay 2 dollars a month for rent of stalls and 5% of the sales as contribution towards working expenses. Surplus earnings accruing to the market are divided among the members according to their individual financial contributions during the year. In the initial year however, such earnings were placed in a common sinking fund to be applied to the early payment of the loan capital and the members received revolving certificates showing their earnings for the year which would be redeemed after the society's borrowings were paid off. The success of the Co-operative market can be assessed from the fact that in 13 years its annual business has grown from 85,000 dollars to 2,75,000 dollars. This success was in no small measure due to the active interest taken by the members.

(3) Turning to India, what do we see? We have not gone very far yet. There are several reasons why we have not but our record is not altogether barren. Women's Co-operatives in the Punjab have done well. In our province membership of women in rural and urban societies is a very common feature. But it is only in one or two cases they have been on the committees of the societies. Societies were, in the past organised exclusively for women only on the basis of thrift. But in the Punjab as well as in Madras, it soon became evident that such societies did not function effectively on the basis of thrift alone, however much the ideal of thrift was appealing. Gradually, therefore, women's societies extended their activities from thrift and credit to cottage industries in Madras and to the provision of educational and recreative facilities in Punjab. In the Punjab the efforts of the Government of the Province to popularise co-operation among women dated back to 1925. Since then, they have gradually strengthened the special staff of women attached to co-operative department, to deal with a variety of activities among which sanitation, hygiene, home-industry, eradication of illiteracy and undesirable customs are particularly important. It is now the turn of Madras have appointed a Woman Special Officer to organise and supervise co-operative societies among women in the city of Madras. This is the first Woman Officer to be recruited to the ranks by the Department. She has the unique advantage of being guided in her work by a committee of prominent ladies in the city of Madras. The deliberations of the Committee have given an impetus to the development of cottage industries among women in the city. There are now seven societies working in the City and there is a proposal to organise three more. The existing societies have given employment to their women members in tailoring, embroidery, knitting, pickle-making, leaf-plate making, etc. In addition to these hand-spinning also has been introduced in some of the societies. Among the societies outside the Madras City the working of the Vizagapatam Women Society deserves special mention. Government have sanctioned the free services of a Junior Inspector to work as the manager of the Society and a subsidy of Rs.100/- p.m. for one year to meet house rent. On 22-8-1947, the Society had 647 members on its rolls with a paid up share capital of Rs.4,928/-. It supplied cloth worth Rs.75,400/- to the Evacuee Relief Department and earned a net profit of Rs.11,700/- up to 30-6-1947.

The activities of the society have hitherto been confined to stitching, ready-made garments and Khadi clothes to Burma Evacuees. Steps are being taken to extend the activities of the society in other directions also. A good deal of persistent propaganda and a number of separate women officers to pull up and revive women societies in other places in the Province where they exist, but also to organise and develop new societies where conditions are favourable are necessary if the co-operative movement among women should develop on proper lines. A five year plan for the development of cottage industries is under consideration, according to which there will be appointed 9 Women Special Officers for the organisation and development of women societies in the Province and societies at the rate of 50 for each year will be organised so that at the end of the 5th year there will be at least one society for women in each taluk.

4. Let us pass on to the possibilities for the future. There is vast scope for the expansion of co-operation among women. But placed, as we are, with more than 90% of women, illiterate in the country-side we cannot make miraculous progress. Firstly, most of our women are conservative. They are not accustomed to transacting business themselves on any large scale except with the assistance of their husbands, sons or other male relations. They find it difficult to persuade themselves to come forward and associate in public enterprises. Fortunately there is a noticeable change in their attitude and educated ladies are now-a-days coming in increasing numbers to undertake social work and set an example to their sisters. But where women actually do business on their own account, be it the taking of a loan from a banking institution, or in producing goods for sale or in growing vegetables and marketing them or in the production and supplies of milk and milk products like ghee or in the rearing of poultry and sale of eggs or in the purchase of household requirements, there is no reason why they should not take to the co-operative method. Conditions in our province are such that we do not require separate credit societies or separate consumer stores for women. They transact business with such societies either as members or as wives of members. Only they have not evinced any interest in the administration of these societies. The Registrar of Co-operative Societies has already appealed to them to serve on the committees of stores and in some cases to act as their Presidents or Secretaries as women are better equipped than men to gauge the needs of a household and clothings and they can instinctively pick out good material from bad. Apart from the contribution which women have to make to the development of co-operative societies in the manner indicated above, there are potentialities for organising themselves exclusively for the attainment of thousand and other objectives which can be said to be of particular interest to women alone. What do you think of mat weaving industry. Who does the rearing of a cows and buffaloes and vending milk, and ghee in most of our small town? Are not most of them women? Surely they can have their own co-operatives. Women can also save money simultaneously with their own business. They have a peculiar aptitude for thrift. In the Punjab about ten young women have been able to take advanced courses of study in the teaching and medical line with the help of their savings in co-operative societies. Some others have built houses or purchased plots of land. Some women have even saved their husbands from embarrassing situations by paying up from their savings money, which the husband had to pay but did not know where to get. When all this has been possible in the Punjab why not our women in the Province organise themselves and get the above benefits. Work of the kind outlined above requires team spirit and sustained effort by a group of self less and enlightened ladies in every taluk and every town. The movement can expand and make still greater progress if wives of officials, Lawyers, Doctors, Teachers and Businessmen in each locality can join

can join and take interest in its development. They should and would doubtless be assisted by whole-time Government Officers.

When women's co-operation takes a deep root in our soil and its foundations are firmly and well laid, we can boldly say that the pace of amelioration of women has been quickened by this socio-economic movement, as no other movement can. Besides this, co-operation gets enriched by women and the development of the women's side of the movement. The Societies not only help to improve the economic condition of their members but also give the woman of all classes and of every station in life opportunities to mingle on equal terms and obtain a thorough training in the principles of self-Government, thereby fitting them to take their rightful place in the parliamentary democracy and even in the Governance of the country. It is not on the 15th August 1947 that we have achieved freedom from slavery in social field; it is only when our women raise their social status and take their rightful place in the society, that we have achieved true independence. I thank you for your patience.

GOOD NIGHT.

(Sd.) xxxx  
FOR REGISTRAR.

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GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS  
Development Department.  
G.O.Ms.No.5636, Development dated 5th December, 1947.

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ABSTRACT

Broadcast talk - Talk on 'Women and Co-operation - Approved -  
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READ:-

From the Registrar of Co-operative Societies letter  
No.Rc.9666/47-V.2., dated 1-12-1947.

O R D E R

The Government approve the text of the talk on 'Women and Co-operation' to be broadcast in Telugu by Sri G. Chandrasekharan, M.A., Deputy Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Madras, on 10th December 1947 and in Tamil by the Deputy Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Trichinopoly on 13th December 1947 from the Madras and Trichinopoly Stations respectively of the All India Radio.

(By Order of His Excellency the Governor)

To  
The Registrar of Co-operative Societies,  
Station Director, All India Radio, Madras.  
The Station Director, All India Radio, Trichinopoly.

X X X X X,  
Secretary to Government

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/True Copy

  
OFFICE ASSISTANT,  
Madras Record Office.

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*15/12/47*